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STEPHEN D. COAN
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For Immediate Release: January 17, 2012
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**State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan Advises Massachusetts's Residents to
Practice Ice & Cold Water Safety**

"Ice and cold water safety is always a key concern here in New England," said State Fire Marshal Stephen Coan. "Each winter, injuries from hypothermia are reported, in addition to skaters and ice fishermen falling through ice, boaters and canoeists overturning in their crafts, and people chasing their unleashed pets onto the ice."

Drowning is also a key issue each year. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control, about ten people die from unintentional drowning each day; two of these are children aged 14 or younger. Safety experts estimate that half of all drowning victims die from the effects of cold water, and not the fatal effects of water-filled lungs. Ice and cold water safety is clearly a very important issue, so that we can prevent water-related deaths and injuries.

Dangers of Thin Ice

"There are several variables that affect the strength of ice on bodies of water, so many that no ice can ever be declared completely safe, especially running water in streams, brooks, rivers," said Coan. Air temperature changes continuously, resulting in thawing and re-freezing. In addition, uneven ice thickness, water currents, tree stumps, rocks and groundwater springs can weaken the ice. "The only truly safe ice is at your local skating rink!" said Coan.

Don't Become a Victim

If you see someone fall through ice remember to "Reach, Throw and Go".

- *Reach* from shore with a pole, ladder or similar object.
- *Throw* a rope to the victim or something to keep them afloat such as a life preserver or boat seat cushion.
- *Go* for help and dial 9-1-1. Do not go out onto the ice where you can become a victim yourself.

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If You Fall In

If you fall through ice, it is vital to not panic. Turn toward the direction you came from. Place your hands and arms onto the ice and place your body against the edge of the ice and kick with your legs to push you forward out of the water, onto the ice. If you break through again, keep trying until you are on solid ice. Remain lying down to keep your weight distributed evenly. If you stand up, you could fall back in. Roll away from the hole and crawl back towards the shore. Get medical help immediately.

The Public Education Unit the following resources to help provide clear concise information on Ice and Cold Water Safety. This information is suitable for the general public and is of particular importance to children.

- ◆ **Tri-fold** pamphlet on Ice and Cold Water Safety in English and Spanish.
- ◆ **PowerPoint** presentation on Ice and Cold Water Safety for middle school and older grades.

Additional information on *Ice and Cold Water Safety* can be found on the Department of Fire Services website at www.mass.gov/dfs then click on *Fire Safety Topics*. Also, the Centers for Disease Control water safety link <http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/Water-safety/waterinjuries-factsheet.html>